

REVIEW ESSAY

Revolutions in Eastern Europe

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The Magic Lantern: The Revolution of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin, and Prague. Timothy Garton Ash. Random House, 1990. Pp 156.

Lighting the Night: Revolution in Eastern Europe. William Echikson. William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1990. Pp viii, 295.

INTRODUCTION

Eastern Europe has ceased to exist. This artificial creation of Yalta existed only as long as the Soviet Army could support the doubtful legitimacy of communist regimes throughout the region. When it became obvious that the Soviets were not going to use force to stop the wave of change in their European empire, the only thing needed was the first hole in the dike. After the change in the government of Poland and the dissolution of the Communist Party in Hungary, no one could stop the flood of freedom.

The pace of events was astonishing—less than a year, if counted from the beginning of the Round Table negotiations in Poland, on February 6, 1989, to the death of Nicolae Ceaucescu and the victory of the revolution in Romania, in late December. Only three months passed from the moment that the first non-communist Polish government took office in September and the revolution in Romania. The fall of communism in Eastern Europe was fast. It was so fast that a comparison with another swift wave

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of revolutions, that of the Springtime of Peoples in 1848, almost automatically comes to mind. By analogy, 1989 was the Autumn of Peoples.

To me, there is more than an analogy in these two dates. They mark the beginning and the end of an epoch. While 1848 was the first revolution against capitalism, 1989 was the first revolution for capitalism. While 1848 was the first step toward the implementation of a utopian vision of the perfect society, 1989 witnessed the end of such attempts. The final blow to utopias was administered a year later, in the fall of 1990, again in Poland. It was when, in the presidential elections, over 80% of the Poles voted against Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki and the intellectual elite which supported him.

Compared to 1990, 1989 was slow. The visible revolution of 1989 was followed by a less visible one. It was as if frozen societies began to make up for lost time. In politics, coalitions formed and broke apart almost monthly, former political prisoners sided with the people who had imprisoned them, people who would not speak to each other entered electoral campaigns side by side. In parliaments, constitutions were amended and entire bodies of statutes were overhauled. New parties emerged daily; there are over 100 of them right now in Poland, ranging from the fifteen-member Party of the Friends of Beer to the Social Democrats, with tens of thousands of members. Every party has its own prescription for the future and hopes to win parliamentary representation in forthcoming elections.

The revolution has also involved a restoration: in Poland, the Czech and Slovak Republic, and Hungary, property confiscated 45 years ago is being returned to the heirs of the original owners. Poland has begun to privatize state-owned factories and enterprises. Recently, an incredible economic energy has surfaced in Poland. Last year, thousands of retailers were bringing products from the West and selling them on the streets or even from cars. Now, some of the very same people are buying up stores and office space that have been stagnant for years, cleaning them up, renovating them in a matter of weeks (a miracle by itself, for even today the repainting of a state-owned shop lasts half a year, at least), and opening luxury stores.

The fastest and most dramatic revolution took place in the realm of ideas. People are discarding today most of what they deeply believed in only a year ago, such as economic security and the right to work. They are even throwing away the beliefs, includ-

ing equality and social justice, that led them to fight communism. The process is undoubtedly painful.

Although these changes were remarkably fast, they did not involve spectacular events. There was often no demonstrating, no shooting, no tearing down of monuments. Thus, it is difficult to perceive the depth of change. The impatient leaders and the newly emerging opponents of the post-communist rulers seek to accelerate the pace of change. However, when Lech Walesa's call for accelerated change elevated him to the presidency in Poland, it turned out that the best acceleration was simply the continuation of policies started by predecessors.

The changes that have taken place are more visible when we stop to reflect on them. Two recent books on the Eastern European Revolutions of 1989 provide an opportunity for such reflection. One of them was written before 1989, and one was sent to the printers in early 1990. Read for this Review less than a year later, they do not have the flavor of reports from relatively recent events; they read almost like ancient history. So much has changed since then.

Timothy Garton Ash's *The Magic Lantern*¹ combines the best qualities of scholarship (Ash is a fellow of All Soul's College, Oxford) and journalism. A frequent contributor to the *New York Review of Books* and *The Independent*, Ash has written essays about Eastern Europe for more than a decade. His previous books were *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*² and *The Uses of Adversity: Essays on the Fate of Central Europe*,³ which won the European Essay Prize. William Echikson, author of *Lighting the Night*,⁴ has been *The Christian Science Monitor* reporter in Eastern Europe since 1982. Also a contributor to *The Economist*, *Business Week*, *Newsweek* and other magazines, Echikson is presently a staff correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal*. In 1989-90, while working on *Lighting the Night*, Echikson was a fellow at Harvard's Russian Research Institute.

¹ Timothy Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern: The Revolution of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin, and Prague* (Random House, 1990). Page references in parentheses referring to Ash's work are to this book.

² Timothy Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity* (Jonathan Cape, 1983).

³ Timothy Garton Ash, *The Uses of Adversity: Essays on the Fate of Central Europe* (Random House, 1989).

⁴ William Echikson, *Lighting the Night: Revolution in Eastern Europe* (William Morrow and Co., 1990). Page numbers in parentheses referring to Echikson's work are to this book.

Perhaps Echikson took his fellowship too seriously. In his book, he never really chooses between personal narrative and a piece of scholarship. He searches for generalizations to fit all of Eastern Europe. Although he admits at the outset that there are more differences than similarities among the countries of the region, in the book itself the differences are barely mentioned. After introducing, one by one, the seven countries of Eastern Europe and their deposed communist leaders (why them?), Echikson picks for every chapter only those details supporting his arguments or suiting his conclusions. Thus the crucial chapters deal almost exclusively (and selectively) with Poland (Ch 5: "The Workers") or Poland and Czechoslovakia (Ch 9: "The Spirit: A Religious Revival," Ch 6: "The Intellectuals"). Hungary is also discussed quite often. Yugoslavia, however, appears only when convenient—when the author deals with conflicts between nationalities (Ch 14: "The Nations"). Although some chapters are very interesting and well written, Echikson's choices seem casual and based almost solely on the author's direct personal experience. While this would be perfectly acceptable in a personal report, it is annoying in a book with more academic ambitions. Moreover, attempts at generalization highlight Echikson's descriptions of his experiences as naive and artificial. The same is true of his jokes and anecdotes, which often seem outdated, at least to an Eastern European reader.

Ash's book reads much better. He sticks to what he saw, heard, sensed, and smelled: free elections in Warsaw; the re-burial of Imre Nagy, the leader of the 1956 uprising, in Budapest; the fall of the Wall in Berlin; day-by-day narrative of the revolution in Prague. That's all. Busy in Prague, Ash missed revolts in Bulgaria and Romania and consequently did not include them in the book. His narrative consists only of the facts, with minimal analysis. Generalizations come as logical corrolaries of the facts described. Some of them are of the highest quality—for example, Ash's brief paragraph about the language of the revolution (p 113) or his remarks about the gradual attraction of the East European oppositions to the ideals of capitalist democracy (pp 105, 115, 151). While writing about the road to the revolutions, Ash once again proves to be not merely a journalist or a scholar, but one of the most profound analysts of Eastern Europe in the West, a position he had already established for himself with *The Uses of Adversity*.⁵

The books by Ash and Echikson raise a number of questions related to the revolutions in Eastern Europe and the future of the

⁵ Ash, *The Uses of Adversity* (cited in note 3).

region. I will analyze some of them using Poland as a case study: the fall of communism; the relative importance of differences, rather than similarities, among the various revolutions in Eastern Europe; the myth of a unified Eastern Europe; and some thoughts on the future course of the Polish revolution, including a renewed disparity between the intelligentsia and the workers. I am not certain if my remarks apply easily to other countries of the region. It was Poland, however, which began the process of the transition from communism and today leads the region in bold economic reforms. Therefore, what has happened in Poland is not irrelevant to other countries.

I. WHAT LED TO THE FALL OF COMMUNISM IN EASTERN EUROPE?

Echikson does not give a precise answer to this question. One can guess, however, that according to him the economic failure of communism, combined with the constant struggle of nations who wanted to win freedom, led directly to the revolutions of 1989. For him, the beginning of the collapse was the first phase of Solidarity in Poland, in 1980-1981. Ash moves the beginning one year earlier, to the 1979 visit of Pope John Paul II to Poland—a glorious return to his homeland, which was later called by the Poles “the rehearsal for Solidarity.”

Ash adds three additional elements to his explanation of the immediate causes of the fall of communism in Eastern Europe: Gorbachev, Helsinki and de Tocqueville (pp 140-42). Gorbachev signifies *perestroika*, *glasnost*, and a clear message from Moscow that the Soviets would not intervene to protect the status quo. Helsinki stands for the moral—and more importantly financial—pressure from the West that prevented local communist elites, abandoned by Moscow, from using force against the wave of change. De Tocqueville once described the most important element of a revolutionary situation as “the ruling elite’s loss of belief in its own right to rule”; according to Ash, this was precisely what happened in Eastern Europe, leading to the revolutions of 1989 (p 142). I agree.

A. The Party’s Loss of Faith in Itself

It is important to develop this point a bit more, especially since a great majority of observers put almost all of the emphasis on the opposition and give little attention to the dynamics of change within the Communist Party elite. In Poland, the erosion of the sense of legitimate power among the communist bureaucracy

was widespread. Ever since the mid-1970s, the middle and upper level *apparatchiks* have been cynical. They discarded Marxist ideology and cared solely about their own power and perquisites. They were determined to defend this power through force or fraud, whichever was necessary and effective.

This was not necessarily true, however, of the top leaders. The most surprising aspect of the Polish revolution was that at its very beginning the communist leaders in Poland agreed to give their power away. Moreover, the transition was overseen by General Wojciech Jaruzelski, the very same man who had introduced martial law in December 1981. Bronislaw Geremek, one of the top Solidarity leaders, as well as many of his colleagues, cannot understand the old guard's willingness even today.

I met with Jaruzelski, still in his presidential office, in September 1990. Communism in Eastern Europe was already gone. In Poland, the Communist Party had ceased to exist eight months earlier. Many of Jaruzelski's good friends lost jobs and luxury apartments, and lived in misery. He was unable to help them, despite the powers of the presidency. Walesa and other Solidarity leaders were calling for his dismissal and new presidential elections. Jaruzelski was sad, bitter, and lonely. Abandoned by old friends who felt betrayed by him, he, in turn, felt betrayed by Walesa and the other Solidarity leaders to whom he believed he was loyal.

"If you had known that this would be the outcome of the Round Table, would you ever have agreed to it?" I asked.

"I don't know. Perhaps I would have tried something else. One thing I am certain of. I would not have tried force," said Jaruzelski.

"Why?"

"Because I have used it once. I learned it does not work."

I came to believe that the prerequisite of the 1989 revolution-by-agreement in Poland was the very fact which had seemed so surprising to me, Geremek, and other observers. This fact was that Jaruzelski and Walesa still led the opposing camps. They had both learned through experience that confrontation does not work. Other leaders, who had not learned this lesson, might have tried force. Moreover, it seems to me that Jaruzelski himself "lost the belief in the Communist Party's right to rule," to paraphrase de Tocqueville as quoted by Ash. I suggest that this transformation took place in a short period of six months before, during, and immediately after the Round Table negotiations. For Jaruzelski, this

six-month period was like waking up from a long dream or, more precisely, like a de-programming experience.

Jaruzelski was not as cynical as the rest of the communist bureaucracy. Their cynicism sprang from the clash of ideology with reality. As with all authoritarian leaders, Jaruzelski was sealed off from reality. The communist system wiped out all mechanisms for feedback from society to the top leadership. The news the leaders got from the media was censored, and the information they received from the bureaucracy was prepackaged to serve the *apparatchiks*. Their daily life was spent making inter-Party deals. When they met with outsiders, they heard flattery (begging for favors) and well-staged lies. In such an environment, it was quite difficult to start doubting one's own convictions. Authoritarian leaders usually maintain ideological illusions much longer than ordinary people do. This is because they cannot learn from information; they can only learn from experience, and not every experience at that. It takes an earthquake to break through the various protective screens and catch their attention.

For Jaruzelski, neither Solidarity nor martial law produced such an earthquake. In 1981, he did believe that Poland was in danger, although it seems to me that what he had in mind was the danger of civil war rather than Soviet intervention. In 1981, he still believed that he was saving the country. The earthquake came later, with the persistent failure to win the workers' support and the total economic collapse. By 1988, his plan to win legitimacy by an economic miracle was doomed. A new wave of strikes and industrial unrest broke out in Poland. The country desperately needed Western help just to survive economically. The West made help contingent upon political change and the opening of talks with the opposition. So began the tremors . . .

In December 1988, Jaruzelski brought a group of reformers to the Communist Party Politburo and forced the Central Committee to agree to reinstate the Solidarity union and to begin negotiations with the opposition. During the Round Table talks, which lasted for two months, the Party reformers were negotiating a compromise which, in their eyes, would strengthen the Party and help implement a democratic, economically viable form of communism. At the same time, their decisions were constantly undermined by the *apparatchiks* in the government and the Party. The bureaucrats did not care about the Party or its program. They cared only about their power and privileges, and they sensed all too well that any democratic compromise would end these. As a result, two processes took place. First, the top negotiators on both sides came ever closer

to each other. Second, the gap between the reformers within the Party and the Party bureaucrats grew ever wider.

Although Jaruzelski himself did not take part in the Round Table talks, he had the final voice, at least on the Communist side. He agreed to partially free elections to be held in June 1989, and he summoned top Party leaders from all over the country to Warsaw to discuss electoral strategy. "I could not believe what I saw and heard," recalled Jaruzelski in September 1990. "I thought that this first true test in many years could help the party to work out a new, socially acceptable program. Instead of a serious discussion, I saw selfish, angry bureaucrats unprepared to think about anything but their own offices and power. I realized I had no common language with them."

While listening to the tape of that conversation, I noticed one interesting detail. While talking about the Communist Party prior to the Round Table, Jaruzelski used the pronoun "us." When he talked about the same Party after the Round Table, he used the third person. It did not surprise me that when Solidarity moved beyond the limits of the Round Table contract and demanded control over the government, Jaruzelski, by that time President, refused to use the coercive power given to him at the Round Table solely to protect the interests of the communist bureaucracy. Besides the fact that he knew it would not work, Jaruzelski was no longer interested in saving "them."

B. The Loss of Popular Legitimacy

My second point about the fall of communism has to do with the loss of the regimes' legitimacy among local populations. The conventional wisdom holds that communism in Eastern Europe was a totally alien system imposed by Soviet tanks and never accepted by a substantial portion of the local populations. "The people of Eastern Europe always considered communism alien, associating it with the Russians, whom, with their oriental heritage, they perceived as culturally second rate compared with Western cultural, religious and intellectual heritage," writes Echikson (p 4).

This convention is a myth. In the form presented by Echikson, this myth reflects the interests of the Eastern European intelligentsia, an obvious contact and source of information for western journalists, writers, and scholars in the region. To some degree this myth reflects the wishful thinking and inevitable denial of the emigres from the region who have long dominated Eastern European studies in the West.

In fact, soon after their installment, the communists enjoyed quite substantial support, and some legitimacy, particularly among

the workers. The victory over the Nazis and the end to the atrocities of German occupation helped the population to look favorably on the Soviet Army. In Poland, despite the uninterrupted power of the Catholic Church, land reform also won some acceptance of the communists by the poorest peasants. Later, industrialization and an upsurge in social mobility helped to win the support of young workers from the villages. During the peak of Stalinism, the population could be roughly divided into three parts: a third who were persecuted by the communists, a third who were neutral, and a third, at least, who hailed the new system. In the early 1950s, popular legitimacy decreased, primarily because of economic hardship and unfulfilled promises of a better life. With de-Stalinization and the ensuing thaw, legitimacy was restored through some improvement in economic conditions, token democratization, and other reforms; nationalist slogans were picked up by local communist parties.

Thus, the history of Eastern European communism has been a gradual process of losing popular legitimacy rather than never having it. An anti-communist minority consisting of the pre-war establishment (the Church, the property owners, the administration, the army, and the non-communist intelligentsia) was joined by new groups that split from the coalition of original supporters of the communist revolution.

First to go was the left-wing intelligentsia, which has historically played an extremely important role in Eastern Europe. With the absence of capitalists and the middle class, the intelligentsia was perceived as an agent of change in the interest of the entire society. Marx believed that the intelligentsia was the least biased of all social classes and, therefore, should have a crucial role in workers' revolutions. It is no wonder that Marxism attracted the intelligentsia, especially since the so-called scientific world view appealed to a mode of thinking acquired through formal education. In my view, Marxism was an ideology of the intelligentsia first, and of the workers second.

Leninism, however, left no room for the intelligentsia. Leninism is an ideology of the bureaucrats. The clash between the Leninist bureaucrats and the Marxist intelligentsia was inevitable. In the USSR, the bureaucrats simply killed off the intelligentsia. In Eastern Europe, the intelligentsia became more and more alienated. The Marxist intellectuals split with the communist parties. It is important to remember that they discarded communism primarily because of the parties' betrayal of the original promise of the socialist revolution. The intellectuals became disillusioned by the

system of lies and tyranny, and by the lack of creative freedom. They did not, however, discard the belief that the intelligentsia, guided by a sense of social mission, could create a better world for the people.

Next to go were the workers. They believed in the system; it promised them bread *and* democracy. When the promises were not fulfilled, in 1956 they went to the streets. After blood was spilled in Poland and Hungary, the workers received new promises: more consumer goods, more democracy, workers' self-management, and national reaffirmation. But the system, which was becoming less and less efficient, could not meet these promises. In 1970, Polish workers turned to the streets again, and, again, blood was spilled. The leadership changed; old promises were renewed. And the workers still believed, but by 1976, when these hopes were once again frustrated, they too became alienated from the system.

On October 16, 1978, a miracle happened. Karol Cardinal Wojtyla of Cracow was elected Pope. The bells tolled all over Poland. People went spontaneously to the streets. The next morning, the nation woke up reborn. The Poles stopped fearing the regime. With the fear gone, the remaining appearances of legitimacy also disappeared. In fact, a new alliance between the workers and the intellectuals had already begun to emerge.

C. Uniting the Intelligentsia and the Workers

This leads to the third point about the fall of communism: *the emergence of a broad anti-communist coalition* in Poland. As Echikson suggests (pp 107-08; 119-20; 128-30), Polish workers and the intelligentsia had a basic unity in their struggle against communism. Although this unity became proverbial, initially it was a big surprise. No doubt, the two groups needed each other. The intellectuals had a claim to leadership that had long been grounded in their own history and their traditional sense of mission. They believed they had a program that could change the system. The only thing they lacked to implement this program was power.

The workers had potential power—the power of numbers, of strikes, and of street demonstrations. However, they had neither a program nor an organization, both of which they needed to turn their dissatisfaction into reform. At first blush, perhaps, nothing could seem more natural than a union between the intelligentsia and the workers. In fact, the intelligentsia and the workers belonged to two totally different, incompatible worlds. They had different problems, different needs, and a different sense of values.

The events in Poland in 1968 and 1970 dramatically evoked these differences.

In March 1968, Polish intellectuals and students protested against tightened censorship, violations of freedom of speech and of the press, and the general lack of intellectual freedoms. Student protests, led by Jacek Kuron, Adam Michnik, and other socialist youth, were violently dispersed by the police and specially prepared groups of "worker activists," armed with wooden clubs. In response, students went to factories to explain to the workers the reasons for their protest. They talked about the freedom of speech, of research, of expression. The workers did not understand. Nor could they be expected to understand the students' claims. The workers could speak their minds relatively unrestrained; the police no longer put *them* in prison solely for what they said. There was no censorship in their families, friendly gatherings, or factory changing rooms. The tightened censorship of a magazine article or a university lecture was not their cup of tea. They sent the students home without support.

The students were no more receptive to the workers' symbols. Two years later, in December 1970, Wladyslaw Gomulka's government doubled the price of meat in Poland. It was two weeks before Christmas, a traditional time for big feasts. Workers in the port towns of Gdansk, Gdynia, and Szczecin went to the streets. The police and army opened fire. Hundreds were killed, thousands wounded. Workers turned to the students for support. They explained their plight: frequent violations of their dignity by factory management, frozen wages, declining housing prospects for young workers, and economic misery. But the students did not respond. The state gave *them* room and board, practically for free. At that time, the intelligentsia still had high social prestige and was relatively better off than the workers. The workers' plight was not their cup of tea.

The events in 1968 and 1970 were the culmination of a centuries-old tradition. An extremely important factor in recent and future developments in Poland is the character of its intelligentsia. The intelligentsia emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, primarily from the impoverished nobility. It accepted the basic set of values of the nobility and strengthened the nobility's concept of social obligations and mission (*noblesse oblige*). Throughout the last century, these nobility-intelligentsia values turned out to be stronger than class and political affiliations. A student, especially a student of liberal arts whose studies were really an entry ticket into the class of the intelligentsia (as distinct from other professionals), was supposed to accept the intelligent-

sia's values, despite her social origins. For all practical purposes, higher education, especially in liberal arts, was equivalent to elevation to the nobility.

This explains the seemingly surprising fact that, even during the peak of industrialization, a far greater number of young Poles wanted to study the humanities and social sciences than to become technicians, engineers, or professionals. The strength of the nobility's values survived communism; a majority of students from peasant or working class origins (who were treated preferably by the communist authorities) usually adopted, in the course of their studies, the intelligentsia's values. In fact, this was the only channel of social mobility in Poland. And by social mobility the Poles, until recently, did not mean merely enrichment (it was despised) but advancement to the upper social class.

A distinctive characteristic of Polish history is the gap between the nobility and the peasants. With the introduction of the so-called second serfdom in the late sixteenth century, a powerful (and popular) myth was created, according to which Polish nobility and peasants had originated from two different ethnic stocks. It was said that the nobility, the descendants of the so-called Sarmatian tribes, had conquered the simple peasants who never actually belonged to the same nation. This concept of two nations took on a life of its own and persisted in Poland for centuries. It served as a reason for depriving the peasants and the burghers of any rights in the noblemen's republic. The principles of democracy and freedom were reserved for those in the noble class, itself a matter of birth. Even in the late eighteenth century, when Poland adopted the second written constitution in the modern world, the fear of destroying the myth (and the nobility's interest in it) was so strong that the reformers stopped short of granting the peasants citizens' rights and freedoms. Instead, they promised the peasantry the protection and care of the government.

And so it continued. While most landlords exploited the peasants ruthlessly, the progressive nobility treated them as children and offered them the promise of paternalistic care and protection, contingent upon their acknowledgment of the nobility's supremacy and obedience toward their protectors. While the nobility thought in terms of freedoms and privileges for themselves, the peasants were supposed to think in terms of favors and benefits granted them by the benevolent elite. The progressive nobility believed that if they could only take power from the hands of the exploiters, they would be able to take care of people's needs.

The intelligentsia inherited this paternalism. Similarly, peasants' children-turned-workers inherited the peasants' sense of powerlessness along with the expectation of paternal care from benevolent elites. This explains another seeming paradox of the Polish social consciousness which exists to this day: the longing for a majoritarian democracy combined with the desire for strong, benevolent leadership. Although at the turn of century, the "simple nation" of the peasants was admitted to the cultural identity of the Poles, the political and social values of the elites and the masses remained distant. It was this gap that revealed itself so painfully between 1968 and 1970.

In 1968, the Polish intelligentsia still believed that they could change society for the better, if only they could exercise power. Their aim was to influence the center of power. After 1956, a group of lay Catholic intelligentsia formed a small contingent in Parliament called "Znak"; one of the founders was Tadeusz Mazowiecki. The left-wing intelligentsia, still very critical of the Church and religion in general, believed that they could directly influence the Communist Party. They took Khrushchev's speech seriously, and they believed in de-Stalinization and the promise of democratization after 1956. Their program was socialism with a human face, implemented from the top of the Party structure. The people would support these policies and benefit from them.

In 1968, two blows were administered to this strategy. First, in March, after the demonstrations and protests in Poland, the program of the progressives within the Communist Party was rejected not only by the top leadership but also by the majority of Party members. A home grown class of *apparatchiks* did not want democracy or socialism with a human face. They called the progressives "revisionists," rejected them outright, and purged them from the Party.

In Czechoslovakia, the "revisionists" initially had more luck. They managed to take control of the Politburo and Central Committee of the Communist Party. But a few hours before the Extraordinary Congress of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, when change from the top was to reach the Party rank-and-file, reforms were halted by Soviet tanks. The lesson was clear. Change from within the system was hopeless. Any attempt to influence the center of communist power was doomed. The Polish intelligentsia learned from this example. Instead of attempting to influence the existing power centers, they sought to build an alternative power structure. The riots of 1970 and 1976 pointed clearly to the source of their power: the workers, whose dissatisfaction with communism was growing.

In the mid-1970s two critical processes took place in Poland. First, two separate segments of the intelligentsia, the Catholics and the socialists, overcame their traditional animosity. This rapprochement was facilitated by the fact that the struggle for individual rights was becoming the central issue for both groups. Second, the intelligentsia began to bridge the gap between themselves and the workers. That is precisely what the KOR (Committee for the Defense of Workers) was about. After the 1976 riots, a group of intellectuals ventured to help the oppressed workers. They offered them legal aid. They collected money to help the families of workers who were imprisoned or fired from jobs. They petitioned the government to release sentenced workers from prisons. They sought support from the international community and from human rights organizations. A year later, when all the workers were freed, KOR changed its name to the Committee for Social Self-Defense, KSS-KOR, reflecting its broader base.

This was the beginning of the civil society in Eastern Europe.⁶ With the Helsinki agreement, a number of other human rights organizations emerged in Poland, as well as the Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia. The intelligentsia and the workers acted together to establish the underground network of "flying universities." In classes, seminars, and workshops, the intelligentsia helped the workers to see the direct relationship between their economic misery and the lack of freedom. The workers, in turn, shared their experience of strikes and other forms of protest. The workers who built independent labor unions helped the intelligentsia to acknowledge that they could be self-reliant and responsible partners. Joining efforts, journalists, professors, and workers published and distributed illegal books, magazines, and fliers.

In hindsight, we can see two crucial changes that took place between 1968 and 1980. First, the non-communist intelligentsia ceased thinking in elitist terms of power and privileges for themselves, and began thinking in terms of human rights for everyone, including the peasants and workers. Second, the workers ceased thinking in terms of benefits, and began thinking in terms of human rights for everyone, including themselves. The workers embraced the political rights that were so important to the intelligentsia. The intelligentsia, for their part, accepted the social and economic rights so important to the workers. Human rights be-

⁶ By "civil society," I mean the loosely knit group of underground organizations that emerged free of communist control. These groups had varying political and economic goals, but they shared a common opposition to the communist regime. See Part V.B.

came the common ground on which the workers and the intelligentsia built their coalition. It is not surprising that human rights were at the top of the list of demands put forward by Solidarity in Gdansk, in the summer of 1980.

Sixteen months of Solidarity in 1980-81 united the Polish nation: the intelligentsia and workers, as well as all other groups that did not belong to the communist establishment, were united against this establishment (or, at least, so it seemed at the time). The conflict ended with the military victory of the establishment, but the moral victory of the nation. Eight years later—when Gorbachev had already replaced Brezhnev's policies, when the communist economy went into total collapse, when workers overcame fears and resumed strikes, and when communist elites lost their belief in their own right to rule—the revolution resumed. This time it succeeded, not only in Poland but in all of Eastern Europe.

II. REVOLUTION OR REVOLUTIONS?

The subtitles of the books by Echikson and Ash are almost identical: "Revolution in Eastern Europe" and "The Revolution of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin, and Prague." Both authors use the singular rather than the plural form. Echikson assumes that more or less the same process took place in every country. Although Ash points to a number of differences between Poland and Hungary, and between Czechoslovakia and East Germany, he seems to share the opinion about one revolution in the region.

I think the plural is more appropriate. There were six different phenomena, linked primarily by the chain of events: one revolution unleashed another, in particular after the collapse of the Berlin Wall. The events themselves, however, were different and led to different results. It is even debatable whether the final result of all the revolutions was the same, because it remains uncertain whether post-communist forces will soon be defeated in Romania and Bulgaria. In East Germany, unification with West Germany almost immediately became the goal. In Yugoslavia, the transformation has been a total collapse of the federation rather than an anti-communist revolt.

A. Mutual Beginnings

As usual, the most difficult stage was the beginning. That was why Poland and Hungary were so important. In these two coun-

tries the limits of Soviet tolerance were to be tested first. Did *perestroika* and Gorbachev's denouncement of the so-called Brezhnev Doctrine, as well as his support for the reformers within the Communist Party, mean that he would tolerate the total overthrow of communism? Free elections? Dissolution of the Warsaw Pact? During the Round Table negotiations in Poland, the question about what was acceptable to Moscow was often raised, not only by the communists but also by Solidarity leaders who had to cool down their more radical rank-and-file. The "Moscow Factor," along with the fear of reaction by local security police and the army, was a major reason for a negotiated compromise and a gradual transition in Poland. When Moscow did not try to prevent Solidarity from taking over the government in September, much more radical, and faster, revolutions became possible in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and the rest of the region. However, they might not have erupted so fast without an unwanted contribution by the late President Ceaucescu of Romania.

Let me elaborate on this detail that is often overlooked (neither Echikson nor Ash mentions it), even though it accelerated the chain of revolutions in the region. In 1988, Nicolae Ceaucescu increased the pace of forced romanization of a large Hungarian minority in Transylvania. Ethnic Hungarians in Romania had become so badly discriminated against and so fearful that thousands of them began crossing the Danube to escape to Hungary, despite the fact that the Romanian border guards shot ruthlessly at the escapees. In time, ethnic Romanians also joined their Hungarian compatriots to escape from Ceaucescu's hell. By early 1989, tens of thousands of escapees from Romania were in Hungary, and the Hungarian government had to secure shelter and food for them. Plagued by its own economic difficulties, Hungary turned to international organizations for assistance. Hungary was promised help contingent on its ratification of the International Convention on Refugees.⁷

In April 1989, the Hungarian and Austrian foreign ministers cut the barbed wires at the border and established free passage between the two countries. Soon after that, the citizens of East Germany, who could travel freely to Hungary, began to run away through the Austro-Hungarian border. East Germany asked Hungary to stop them and send the runaways back home, in accordance with the provisions of the treaty between the two countries.

⁷ *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 189 UNTS 150 (July 28, 1951).

The Hungarian government found itself caught between the treaty with East Germany and the Convention on Refugees, which prohibits the return of a refugee if he will be persecuted in the home country. If the Hungarians sent the East Germans back, they would jeopardize prospects for international assistance for the refugees from Romania. After some deliberations, the Hungarians chose the Convention.

Hundreds of thousands of Germans escaped through Hungary. Soon, they were flooding Warsaw and Prague as well. The first hole in the Berlin Wall had been pierced. Moreover, this massive emigration brought the message back to the people who remained in Leipzig, East Berlin, Magdeburg, and Rostok that escape was possible. Massive emigration also undermined the facade of legitimacy of the East German system. With new hope and encouragement, people went to the streets, and the Wall fell.

Also relevant was the fact that East German escapees drove to Hungary through Czechoslovakia. Thus, the Czechs and Slovaks could also see the exodus. Later, when the agreement between the Hungarian, Austrian, and West German governments was reached, trains with East German refugees to the *Bundesrepublik* were crossing Czechoslovakia once again. The Czechs could see the Germans heading for freedom. This created some fervor among the Czechs themselves. After the fall of the Wall, they were ready for their own revolution in Prague.

As with waves at sea, each revolution picked up some energy from the preceeding one and could not avoid building its own momentum. It makes sense that each revolution was shorter than the preceeding one. Echikson quotes Prague graffiti which read: "ten years in Poland, ten months in Hungary, ten weeks in East Germany, and ten days in Czechoslovakia" (p 11). Although Ash corrects Echikson, noting that "ten days" lasted at least nineteen (p 78), there is no doubt that the pace of events quickened over time.

B. Separate Development

Although these beginnings were largely shared by the Eastern European countries, the differences in their revolutionary courses quickly emerged. One significant difference was in the very mood of the revolutions. Ash tells of celebrations at the Berlin Wall and describes in detail the eighteen days of revolutionary festivities in Prague (pp 61-130). When initial fear and uncertainty disappeared, positive emotions and feelings flooded Germany and Czechoslovakia. Joy, happiness, and hope were widespread. The Poles could only envy their neighbors. The revolution in Poland was serious

and gray. True, after the electoral victory in June, many young demonstrators went to the streets. True, there were triumphant rallies when the Solidarity government was sworn in. But only a handful of activists participated in these events. The people were tired and quite often uninterested.

The change in Poland came too late for joy. The Poles had seen their big days in 1980. Later, during martial law, young people had their heyday when they went out to the streets to fight riot police. In 1989, there were no riots, no demonstrations, no popular unrest, but only the spreading paralysis in economic life, constantly escalating prices, lack of hope, doom and gloom. The beginning of the Round Table stirred some interest, but the negotiations lasted too long for enthusiasm to endure. When a compromise was finally signed, the Poles were too tired to really enjoy it.

As everybody knows all too well, the revolution in Romania had a different character of violence, terror, and mourning. If there was any ecstasy over the abolition of a tyrant, it was overshadowed by anger, hatred, and a strong thirst for revenge. Violence seldom leads to a peaceful and serene ending.

Still more important were the differences in larger patterns of development that paved the way to change in each country. These different roads to revolution have visible consequences in the current problems of the Eastern European countries. Interestingly, the pattern of change in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia followed the scenarios suggested in 1986 by Ash in "Does Central Europe Exist?"—one of the very best essays ever written on Central Europe.⁸

In Poland, it was a revolution from outside the system. As noted, by 1980 the opposition intelligentsia joined forces with independent workers' leaders and channelled popular discontent into a revolt against communism. After martial law was introduced in 1981, the revolt continued in the form of the civil society, growing outside of the communist-controlled state. The growth of the civil society, and the withdrawal of support for the communists by the workers were the sources of strength for the opposition. With each side understanding the strength of the other, a negotiated compromise between them became possible. In 1989, a total collapse of the economy, *perestroika*, and pressure from the West, helped produce a compromise. When free elections proved that support for the

⁸ Ash, *The Uses of Adversity* at 179 (cited in note 3).

communists was weaker than anyone had expected, the compromise was transcended.

This transition through negotiation had important consequences. First among them was the relatively slow dismantling of the bulwarks of communism in Poland. While in Czechoslovakia one of the first moves was the dissolution of the security police, in Poland it took almost a year. The old bureaucracy stayed in office until the presidential elections in November 1990, and despite the changes in top government positions, a majority of economic and administrative decisions were still controlled by the members of the communist *nomenklatura*.

The second consequence of the Polish mode of transition was the lack of retribution. In Romania, Ceaucescu was shot, for better or worse. In Bulgaria, Zhivkov could be brought to trial. In Czechoslovakia, the most compromised communist leaders could be held responsible for their deeds. Immunity for them was neither promised nor implied. Although the Solidarity side at the Round Table claims that they did not make any deals with the communists, the personal security of the latter was presumed. Such was the effect of the "bold line" with which Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki promised to divide the post-communist future from the communist past. Haunted by growing hardships, seeing the members of the *nomenklatura* among the richest private businessmen in Poland, and watching the news about their counterparts in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and East Germany on trial, the Poles were becoming bitter and resentful.

The third consequence of a negotiated transition in Poland was by far the most important. The workers' leader Lech Walesa was undoubtedly perceived by the communist government as the most important partner in a negotiated compromise. However, Walesa needed advice and assistance to negotiate with the government. His natural choice for negotiations were outspoken intellectuals rather than workers and union leaders. Thus, the first post-communist establishment that was formed in anticipation of the Round Table negotiations consisted primarily of the intelligentsia. After the compromise was reached, the same intelligentsia members were appointed by Walesa as candidates for the seats allocated to Solidarity in Parliament. Thus, the seed of the new (old) social conflict was planted.

In Hungary, the process of change was different. Workers were not so strong an element of the opposition as in Poland. There was no insurmountable gap between the government and the society. On the contrary, "goulash communism" had won significant support for Janos Kadar. The leaders of the Hungarian opposition did

not believe in the efficacy of mass protest against communism. Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Poland in 1981 provided them with sufficient proof that it could not work. They put some hope in international pressure, primarily by the "united intelligentsia of the world," exerted on the Soviets. Internally, the Hungarian intellectual opposition believed in enlightened change from the top. Gyorgy Konrad, one of the leading philosophers of the opposition, wrote in 1984:

The best we can hope to achieve is an enlightened, paternalistic authoritarianism, accompanied by a measured willingness to undertake gradual liberal reforms. For us, the least of all evils is the liberal-conservative version of communism, of the sort we see around us in Hungary.⁹

And so it happened. A group of reformers inside the Hungarian Communist Party began the reforms. This process fostered various opposition groups, which emerged during the last years of communist rule in Hungary. Consequently, the first Round Table in Hungary gathered these opposition groups so that they could work out their common position vis-à-vis the Party. Only later did they begin negotiations with the Communists. Not surprisingly, relatively soon after the collapse of communism, the alliance disintegrated into its original members and a number of new groupings that emerged during the transition. The emergence of the multiparty system was much less painful than in Poland.

In Czechoslovakia, the workers never really rebelled. The 1968 Soviet intervention came a few hours before the workers in the Party were to become a major part of the reform movement. The opposition could not count on gradual change from above, for there existed no "above." Gustav Husak and his cronies had purged all intellectuals and reformers from the Party; there was no enlightened leadership. In 1988, frightened by *perestroika* in the USSR, the *apparatchiks* engineered a preemptive coup, replacing the ailing Husak with "strong man" Milos Jakes.

True, there was Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia. However, it did not have such strong social support as the KOR in Poland. True, there was some mounting dissatisfaction among the young people, environmentalists, and students. However, there was no one at the top to listen to their petitions. In 1985, Vaclav Havel saw the creation of "the fifth column of social consciousness" as the only viable

⁹ Quoted in *id.* at 202.

strategy for the opposition in Czechoslovakia.¹⁰ Truth, non-violence, self-sacrifice, and persistence were to prepare the ground for change. The change itself, however, could only be triggered by an event outside the control of anyone in Czechoslovakia. Revolutions in Poland and Hungary, and especially in East Germany, provided the necessary catalyst. The revolution in Czechoslovakia was swift; it took place in the streets and at rallies rather than in a long process of preparation and negotiations. The existence of Aleksander Dubcek, of Charter 77, and of Vaclav Havel saved the revolution from chaos by providing it with an alternative leadership and structure.

In Bulgaria, the street events were in some ways similar to those in Czechoslovakia. However, there was not much organized opposition or alternative leadership. No one could present a credible claim to power. Thus, the communist leadership managed to maintain control over events. By sacrificing Zhivkov, and bringing his communist opponent Peter Mladenov into leadership, the Bulgarian communists bought some time. This helped them to win the elections. Now, they are playing a major role in the transition to a market economy. One can expect a long road ahead for Bulgaria.

In Romania, Ceaucescu and the Securitate were in a class by themselves, unlike anything that had existed in the region since Stalin. A bloody revolution ensued, the first round of which ended with the replacement of the tyrant and his guard by "normal" communists who changed their name to socialists and repainted their faces to look more human.

Finally, the revolution in East Germany had little in common with all the others. What began as reform, led by a bunch of reformers from protestant churches and opposition intelligentsia, soon turned into the unification with West Germany.

There was only one common thread connecting all of these revolutions: what began as a moderate change quickly transcended its original scope. There were two reasons for this. First, between 1968 and 1989, a great majority of opposition leaders had come, often painfully, to believe that socialism with a human face is a contradiction in terms and cannot work. Ash gives an excellent account of that process in the last chapter of *The Magic Lantern*. Second, the actual force of appeal of communism turned out to be close to zero. When the Soviet might was removed from the picture

¹⁰ Quoted in *id* at 199.

in Eastern Europe, there was nothing left for the regimes to hold on to.

Fortunately, neither the regimes nor the oppositions realized this weakness. If they knew that they had virtually no support, Polish and Hungarian communists would never have consented to negotiations. They would have postponed the solution and prepared for another confrontation. It was only by virtue of communist arrogance that the rest of Eastern Europe avoided the lot of Romania.

Let me close this sketchy comparison of patterns of change with a brief remark about the developments in the Soviet Union. *Glasnost* was a long-overdue dream of the Soviet intelligentsia. By introducing it, Gorbachev created an alliance between himself and the intellectual elite of the country. With *perestroika* he took a step forward and began to reform the system. Neither Gorbachev nor the elitist intelligentsia, however, cared about organizing the workers and winning their support for the reforms. *Perestroika* remained a revolution from the top. When changes became too radical for the bureaucracy, the *apparatchiks* began the counteroffensive. They remained the strongest social and political force. Consequently, Gorbachev began to balk. His retreat from *glasnost* alienated part of the reformist intelligentsia, even more so because they found an alternative in Boris Yeltsin and the leaders of national liberation movements in the republics. With the growing radicalism of the republics, the bureaucratic backlash increased. Gorbachev needed a strong force on which he could base his policies. Never having won the workers, and having lost the intelligentsia (which, incidentally, turned out not to be strong enough—or willing enough—to implement radical democratic changes), his choices became limited to the Party bureaucracy and the army. If he chooses the latter, the best possible scenario is a long process of nondemocratic economic change from the top, constantly undermined by the most powerful social group, i.e., the bureaucracy, and jeopardized by the disintegrating tendencies in the republics. The disintegration will continue until Russian workers wake up and begin to exercise the power they potentially could have.

III. DOES EASTERN EUROPE EXIST?

This question is a paraphrase of Timothy Garton Ash's "Does Central Europe Exist?" His very question about a sub-region of Central Europe implies a negative answer about Eastern Europe. Echikson is uncertain. "Eastern Europe, after all, is a misnomer," he writes at the very beginning of his book:

It never was a monolithic bloc. It is a region full of deep differences—different nationalities, different traditions, different histories. The imposition of Soviet-style communism not only failed to wipe out these differences: one of the exhilarating and dangerous aspects of the present revolution is the rediscovery of unique national identities. My contention remains, however, that the former Soviet Empire can be dealt with as a whole. Eastern Europeans face common problems. All are small countries, fearful for their very existence. All have broken the Communist Party's monopoly of power. All now must pick up the pieces of their bankrupt centrally planned economies. Everywhere in these societies which long preached egalitarian ideals, inequality has mounted. Religious belief has become more powerful. A defiant young generation has emerged. (p 4)

A. Similarities and Differences

Let me make a few points about some of the issues raised by Echikson. First, consider the historical heritage of the region. Since 1988, I have been guest-teaching a university course in the United States called "Human Rights in Eastern Europe." The standard mid-term paper asks students to describe similarities and differences between the countries of Eastern Europe. Reading students' papers, I am always struck by a clear pattern that emerges: the predominance of dissimilarities before 1945; growing similarities under communism, with two peaks, one in 1950-55 and another in the late 1960s through the mid-1970s; and, finally, a growing differentiation between the countries of the region in the last decade.

The major historical similarity was that the countries of Eastern Europe did not belong to the West. (East Germany was an exception; the Czechs and the Poles, however, would claim they belonged to the West in a cultural sense.) Another common characteristic was a period of national subjugation to imperialist powers (although Hungary, even though a weaker partner in the Austro-Hungarian empire, could claim exception). Ethnic and national conflicts, as well as differing degrees of nationalism, also characterized all of the countries of Eastern Europe. Another common trait was economic and social backwardness. Sharp social polarization between tiny minorities of landowners and the great majority of poor or landless peasants, lack of a middle class, and weak capitalism characterized all countries of the region (with the exception of the more industrialized Czech lands). In politics, most of the countries of the region began an independent national exis-

tence after World War I as majoritarian parliamentary democracies, and most of them slid into authoritarianism in a relatively short time.

These characteristics were not unique to Eastern Europe. They were shared by many of the post-feudal societies of Southern Europe, Latin America, and, later, Southeast Asia. What really matters is how individual nations cope with such common heritages. In this respect, the countries of Eastern Europe had almost nothing in common. Coping mechanisms that had developed under Turkish, Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Prussian domination varied. Local self-government and parliamentary representation of the landowning elite could develop in the Austro-Hungarian empire, whereas the progressive paternalism of the elite emerged to countervail the Czars' despotism in the Russian empire.

Personal values and behavior had been shaped by religions. In that respect, Eastern Orthodox Christianity in Bulgaria and Romania reinforced despotism and the passivity of the people. In Poland and Slovakia, Catholicism went well with the paternalism of the elites, while the Protestant churches in Germany paved the way toward capitalism and individual responsibility. Protestant influence among the Czechs and Hungarians also distinguished them from the Poles for whom the Reformation was not much more than a passing fad among the upper nobility. I maintain that different religious backgrounds were of great importance throughout the communist period and are becoming more and more visible today, even though in some countries a majority of the post-World War II generation has never been to a church or said a prayer.

Another historical difference involved the role of the nobility and the origins of the intelligentsia. As noted, the nobility played a crucial role in Poland, and the intelligentsia inherited their set of values. The intelligentsia also played an important role for the Czechs; however, they had very little in common with their Polish counterparts. The Czech intelligentsia did not inherit the nobility's values, because their nobility was almost totally extinguished at the Battle of White Mountain in 1620. Therefore, while Polish intellectuals represented the values of a descending upper class, the Czech intelligentsia expressed the views of the ascending lower and middle classes. This difference is clearly visible in every encounter between an educated Pole and a Czech, even though they both might have belonged to the opposition. The Slovaks, by contrast, had neither nobility nor much intelligentsia of their own. This explains the degree of their ethnic anxiety and the desire for a distinct national and political identity.

This brings us to perhaps the most significant problem of all: the heritage of nationalism and ethnic animosity within the countries of Eastern Europe. The problems of ethnic minorities inside particular countries were reinforced by the animosities among the reemerging countries in the region after World War I; Hungary opposing Romania, and Poland participating in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia at Munich, are only two examples of the inheritance of hostility, animosities, conflicts, and resentments in the region. This sad heritage is becoming visible once again in post-communist Europe.

Does this mean that Eastern Europe never existed as a coherent region? It did, but only for about ten years, from the mid-1960s through the mid-'70s. My point is that any coherence had less to do with Russian domination and more to do with the emergence of the national communist elites who voluntarily adopted the Soviet model of social organization.

B. Communism in Its Historical Modes: Common Lessons in Difference

Communism in Eastern Europe can be roughly divided into four phases. This general outline, however, cannot be allowed to overwhelm the unique historical events in each country. But it is useful to derive some common themes from these events, even if their importance varies among the countries involved. A weakness in Echikson's book is that the foreign observer often seeks unity at the expense of precision.

1. The coercive phase.

The first phase of communism ran from the communist take-overs (roughly in 1948) until 1956. It can be called the "coercive phase." Nationalization and rapid industrialization were introduced with the use of repression and coercion. Stalinism was imposed either directly by the Red Army and the KGB or by local servile communist elites dominated by the Soviets.

2. Nationalist communism.

The second phase, between 1956 and the mid-sixties, can be labeled the period of "nationalist communism." With the rejection of Stalinism and direct coercion and the realization that the creation of a Marxist paradise might take longer than initially assumed, communist parties in Eastern Europe attempted to win legitimacy with nationalist rhetoric. Another reason for nationalist

communism was the emergence of a new generation of indigenous communists who wanted to take power away from an older "internationalist" guard. The internationalism of the proletariat was limited to hugs between the leaders and common subordination to the Kremlin. In daily rhetoric, the word "nation" was used more and more often. The Polish United Workers Party claimed to speak on behalf of the Poles, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia claimed to represent the best interests of the Czechoslovak nation (did it ever exist?), the Hungarian Party spoke for Hungarians, the Bulgarian, for Bulgarians; and so on.

The results were disastrous. If a party was to represent all of the people and the nation at the same time, it followed that the people could be only one nation. Minorities and ethnic groups had to be ignored or wiped out. As a consequence, Hungarians in Romania were forcibly romanized, Turks in Bulgaria were made Bulgarians, Jews and Germans in Poland were encouraged to emigrate, and the Czechs and the Slovaks were made Czechoslovakians. This intolerance was consistent with the dominant ideology of the system, which did not encourage diversity or pluralism.

This sad inheritance has already become the most difficult problem for post-communist governments in all the countries of the region, with the exception of Poland. National and ethnic rivalries are perceived as the principal threat to democracy. I am not so pessimistic. Nor would I rush to condemn emerging nationalism and ethnic revivals. After decades of subjugation, nations and minorities need to reassert their independence, define and re-define their identities, cherish their own distinct pride. Without this, they will not be able to overcome pervasive animosities, fears, and resentments. Western Europe is strengthening its community today. It is easy to forget that it became possible only after Charles de Gaulle helped rebuild national pride in France, and other countries could also reassert their distinct identities. One can be impressed with the pace of the unification process once the participants' basic identity needs have been met.

3. Cynical communism.

The third phase of communism in Eastern Europe can be called the "cynical" or "pragmatic" phase. It came about in the late 1960s, when local communist elites realized three things: first, that the economic promise of socialism could not be fulfilled, at least not for everybody; second, that without economic performance nationalist rhetoric would not maintain legitimacy for long; third, that the economic reforms necessary to revitalize the system

would cause the elites to lose political power. They flatly rejected reforms and chose to maintain their own power and privileges. De-Stalinization granted the bureaucracies a sense of personal security. Now they needed a constitutional system that would secure their power and help them dominate their own societies.

The model was ready. It was the Soviet, post-Stalinist legal and constitutional system. Interestingly, at this time most of the Eastern European countries introduced Soviet-like changes in their constitutions. It was not because the leaders were more frightened of Brezhnev than their predecessors were of Stalin. They adopted the system which served well the interests of the local *nomenklatura*.

In essence, this system created almost unlimited privileges for the bureaucracy (in the 1970s, many of them became hereditary by law), combined with a broad array of controls over society. Coercion and terror were downgraded to become potential controls to be used against the active opponents rather than for daily operation of the system, as was the case under Stalinism. Legal measures, a lack of human rights and due process, and the absence of individual remedies continued to help control the population. However, by far the most important were economic and social controls.

The state was the main employer and the party-state bureaucracy controlled nearly everyone's employment, advancement, and well-being. The bureaucracy also controlled information: the media, newspapers, magazines, publishing houses, and instruction in the schools, colleges, and universities. The censorship degenerated into control over any criticism or information which was unwelcome by any individual within the party system. The bureaucracy controlled associations and professional organizations; the *nomenklatura* installed its own candidates in leadership positions in associations; the security officers penetrated the staff of social organizations, which were also put under tight financial controls. Finally, the bureaucracy selectively employed a wide system of various benefits to subjugate society: issuance of passports and access to foreign currency; special coupons that permitted the purchase of a car, a house, or other scarce products, often for half of the official price; vacations in luxury resorts; and awards and honors. These were just a few of the selective system of benefits to promote loyalty to the system and cooperation with it. The role of these controls increased as the economic crisis worsened and consumer goods grew ever more scarce.

The degree to which this system was implemented varied from country to country. In Czechoslovakia, where the state was the sole employer in the economy, it was relatively easy to control the activists of the Prague Spring through economic means; after 1968, professors were made caretakers and trashmen, journalists were banned from their jobs, the opposition was put into economic deprivation. During the years of martial law in Poland, when a small but vital private sector survived, a significant number of Solidarity activists joined the private sector and became independent producers. The power of the Church in Poland created a hole in the system of tight control over information (the Church had its own publications and some institutions of religious instruction) and over association (the Church was a forum for relatively uncontrolled social activity). These are two of a number of reasons why in Poland the civil society, an opposition, and a strong organization for change developed more effectively and sooner than in other countries of the region.

However, for the bureaucracy the ideal was the same everywhere. It was the Soviet-like system of economic and social control that would protect the interests of the *nomenklatura*. During this period of domination by a "new class," the similarities among the countries of Eastern Europe in their constitutional, legal, and political systems reached their peak. It was during this period that one Eastern Europe truly did exist.

It did not last long. Economic and social crisis divided the region once again. Although the reasons for the economic crisis were similar (i.e., the inability to get from the so-called "extensive" phase of the industrialization to the "intensive" one without a deep political transformation that would undermine the power of the *nomenklatura*), its pace and direction differed. The means employed to cope with the economic and political crises were also different. They included liberalization and martial law (again) in Poland; slow reforms from the top in Hungary; growing austerity and terror in Romania; tightened controls in Czechoslovakia; and cheating and manipulation in Bulgaria. After Gorbachev denounced the Brezhnev Doctrine, which had given the Soviets the right to intervene in defense of communism throughout the empire, every country chose its own, again historically determined, way of coping with crisis. Eastern Europe ceased to exist long before the overthrow of the communist monopoly of power; it ceased to exist when the countries of the region entered the fourth, and last, phase of communism, the "phase of crisis."

4. The post-communist crisis.

Today, at the beginning of post-communist development, the countries of former Eastern Europe still have many similar problems. Echikson enumerates some of them: "to pick up the pieces of their bankrupt centrally planned economies," and to deal with mounting inequality in societies that "long preached egalitarian ideas" (p 4). One can add to his list a number of other significant similarities; for example, the weakening of the original reformist elites that led to the fall of communism.

However, the differences predominate. The power and legitimacy of new governing elites vary as do the prospects for the emergence of alternative power elites. The power and the unity of the opposition is different in each country. The power of the society, especially of the workers, and the degree of their organization, are different. There are also various national and ethnic conflicts within and among the countries of the region. It will be these differences, rather than any similarities, that determine, once again, the future of every country.

C. Central Europe?

It seems clear that Eastern Europe does not exist. The phrase has fallen out of usage even within the region. In Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, it is being replaced by the new description "Central Europe." Does *it* exist?

It does not for someone who happens to travel between Poland and Czechoslovakia. Ash compares the frontier between the two countries to the Iron Curtain (pp 145-47). President Havel himself asked the Czech and Slovak government to ease restrictions on travel between Czechoslovakia and Poland. This request was in vain. Central Europe does not exist for a Pole in Hungary, who encounters hostility instead of once proverbial friendship. It does not exist for a Czech coming to Warsaw, who is patronized by the Poles, bragging about their noble traditions and their primacy in revolutions.

In his essay "Does Central Europe Exist?" Ash wrote, "to say that Poland is to Central Europe as Russia is to Europe would be, no doubt, somewhat facile."¹¹ Nevertheless, he raised an interesting question. He also noticed that a leading organizer of the Polish opposition, Adam Michnik, never used the notion of "Central Eu-

¹¹ Id at 188.

rope." Instead, he always talked about direct links to the West. This is not surprising; Poland never really did belong to Central Europe. In the past, Central Europe might have encompassed Hungary, Czechoslovakia and, at best, the southern part of Poland belonging to Austro-Hungary in the nineteenth century. The Polish intelligentsia, however, emerged primarily under Russian occupation. Despite an almost complete denial of this fact, the Polish intelligentsia's world view was influenced to a high degree by the progressive Russian intelligentsia of the nineteenth century. Paternalism, elitism, a sense of mission, and a claim to one truth all originated from this same source. Denying this influence, the Poles have usually emphasized their cultural links with Western Europe.

If Central Europe ever existed, it did so primarily as an ideal. It existed in the minds of Polish, Czech, Slovak, and Hungarian intellectuals. It existed in the realm of the spirit, as a place in which the real European culture never surrendered to the force of market capitalism. In his essay "The Tragedy of Central Europe," Milan Kundera made precisely this point.¹² Central European intellectuals felt betrayed by the West because the West compromised the cultural ideals of Europe, the ideals for which the Hungarians died in 1956. Not much has changed since then. Eight years later, in the conclusion of his book about the Revolution of 1989, Ash writes, "I have sometimes thought that the real divide is between those (in the West) who have Europe and those (in the East) who believe in it" (pp 153-54).

In 1989, the idea of a confederacy with Czechoslovakia and, perhaps, Hungary was voiced quite often in Poland, especially by the intelligentsia who still believed in the realm of the spirit. In 1990, the confederacy seemed impossible, and the idea was largely discarded. Three countries were facing capitalism, which produced a competitive spirit among them ill-suited to confederacy. It seemed that every country would separately race to the West, to the Common Market, to the Council of Europe, and to Western credits.

Then, on February 15, 1991, a miracle happened. Presidents Lech Walesa of Poland and Vaclav Havel of the Czech and Slovak Republic, as well as Prime Minister Janos Antall of Hungary, met at the historic site of Visegrad in Hungary to sign a declaration of friendship and cooperation.¹³ Central Europe was announced as a

¹² Milan Kundera, *The Tragedy of Central Europe*, NY Rev of Books 33 (Apr 26, 1984).

¹³ Stephen Engelberg, *Three Eastern European Leaders Confer, Gingerly*, NY Times § 1 at 25 (Feb 17, 1991).

political fact. It happened a month after the Soviet intervention in Vilnius, the heralded retreat from *perestroika*. A common threat helped to form an alliance that could not be formed by common interests. Perhaps then we have come to see, however accidentally, a mini-Central Europe?

IV. WHERE IS THE END?

Ash and Echikson are both somewhat reluctant to make predictions. Of course, it is no small task to understand what happened yesterday, or is happening today, and anticipating the future is a dangerous business, particularly in light of the political, economic, and ethnic turmoil in the various countries. Even if we are to witness growing cooperation and friendship within Central Europe in the future, it is still more useful to avoid generalizations and treat every country separately, with its own problems and solutions. I conclude with some comments about the continuation of the revolutionary process in Poland.

A. The Aftermath of Revolution

The most casual awareness of history indicates that the victory of a revolution usually is only the beginning of a long revolutionary process. A revolution is a way to force change in the face of resistance on the part of established structures. Thus, revolutions mobilize all the groups and individuals dissatisfied with existing reality. The leaders of revolutions usually attract followers by making promises. Even if they do not make promises, revolutions raise expectations. These expectations are usually too high and often contradictory (for example, the bourgeoisie in the eighteenth-century revolutions had different expectations than the peasants and workers who would be employed and exploited by that very bourgeoisie). To meet these promises and expectations, enormous resources are needed. Revolutions usually break out when the treasury is empty, and, by themselves, they do not produce much. Successful revolutions (a minority of those that break out) at best create conditions for future growth.

Thus, the real problem of every revolution is how to deal with the frustrated expectations of those who will pay the price of reforms and future progress. This phase usually takes more time, pain, and blood than the original assault on the pre-revolutionary establishment. Cromwell used more force against the levelers and

the diggers than against the King of England and his court; the Jacobin phase of the French revolution was more bloody than the original assault on the Bastille.

There is no reason why the present wave of revolutions should be different, especially since there was an implicit contradiction in the original aims of the process. In Poland, the Round Table contract between the communist government and the opposition was about democracy. Democracy means the will of the majority. In an impoverished country in which the standard of living has continuously decreased, the will of the majority naturally called for fast improvement in living conditions.

This was impossible without a drastic overhaul of the economic system. But economic reform and the introduction of an effective market system would not lead to immediate improvement either. The workers and peasants would pay the price for change. Prices had to be frozen to stop hyperinflation, emerging capitalism had to be permitted to use the workforce to its economic advantage, and the elimination of a huge budget deficit necessitated cuts in the state's expenditures. In short, the prescription for post-communist Poland was to get the nation's permission (if the reforms were to be democratic) for another period of economic deprivation and sacrifice.

The government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki, sworn in in September 1989, initially had immense popular support for its program of bold economic reform. It believed that the very fact that Mazowiecki led the first post-communist government in Poland assured legitimacy for the government and its reforms. Public opinion polls supported this conviction. However, by late February 1990, Solidarity union leader Lech Walesa began to claim that this line of credit was almost exhausted. He called for the purging of the communist *nomenklatura*, which was still entrenched in the upper and middle levels of state administration and economic management. Walesa also provoked new divisions within the Solidarity coalition and urged the government to speed up reforms. In the bitter presidential race that ensued, these divisions solidified and new coalitions emerged.

In November, Prime Minister Mazowiecki suffered a bitter defeat in popular presidential elections (he did not even qualify for a second round after being defeated by Stanislaus Tyminski, a totally unknown businessman of Polish origin from Canada). In December, Lech Walesa replaced General Jaruzelski as President of Poland, and a new government, dominated by liberal economists, took over. Interestingly enough, although the Poles voted against

radical economic reforms, Leszek Balcerowicz, a deputy prime minister in charge of reforms, retained his position, and the new government continued his policies. This would substantiate the claim that Walesa's original goal was to increase legitimacy for Balcerowicz's plan by getting a substantial majority of the popular vote.

However, the by-products of electoral campaigning can jeopardize the results. Walesa and Tyminski made promises during the campaign. Replacement of the government created a new wave of expectations. Now, we are witnessing the next round of frustration. How will the new government, and Walesa himself, deal with this? We may soon know, but even today the situation in Poland is more tense than a year ago. There is even less enthusiasm and hope, more bitterness, frustration, and fear.

These events, however scary, are only a superficial expression of a much deeper change that took place in Poland in 1990. In fact, during that short period, two basic axioms of social research about the last phase of communism proved invalid: the strength of the civil society to effect the transition to democratic government, and the growing unity between the intelligentsia and the workers.

B. The Civil Society

Ever since the early 1980s, a majority of scholars and observers agreed that a crucial agent of change in Poland would be the emerging "civil society." The civil society was a growing network of underground organizations outside of communist control. In fact, it was the civil society that Solidarity represented at the Round Table in Poland. A logical conclusion was that, with the end of communism, the civil society would evolve into pluralistic and democratic political structures.

The developments in Poland disproved this hopeful conclusion. By mid-1990, the civil society had disintegrated and democratic structures had not yet been built. It turned out that the civil society, instead of being a solid foundational structure, was merely a set of strategies and instruments to countervail the power of the communist system. As noted, these controls were economic domination, monopolization of the media, control over association, and selective distribution of benefits. These were precisely the spheres in which the civil society developed. It began with KOR activists collecting money to support the families of imprisoned or fired workers (to counter economic control). It grew through an immense network of underground publications, newspapers, and magazines (to counter the monopolization of the media and censor-

ship) and through underground associations and unions (to counter the control over social life). It also created an alternative network of benefits which could be provided outside of state control (in this respect the help from the West, channelled by the Church in Poland, was crucial).

Not having its own economic base, the civil society was just a response to communism. With the end of communism, there was no longer a need for this countervailing mechanism. The civil society began to disintegrate. The disintegration was also a natural result of the fact that with Solidarity's victory a great majority of civil society activists became members of Parliament or of the new administration. It turned out to be virtually impossible to sustain a Polish form of the civil society (a bulwark against the state) with the very same people who became a part of the state.

C. Growing Disunity Between Workers and Intelligentsia

The second axiom about the developments in Poland was the belief that with Solidarity in 1980-81, with martial law, and with the growth of the civil society, the gap between the intelligentsia and the workers came to a close. The electoral campaign in 1990-91 proved this belief false. In fact, the gap between the intelligentsia and the people (workers and peasants, at least) has never been so wide as last year.

In view of this development, Lawrence Goodwyn's *Breaking the Barrier: The Rise of Solidarity in Poland*¹⁴ turns out to be prophetic. A historian of the labor movement in America, Goodwyn was attracted to Solidarity. Between 1982 and 1985 he researched a book in which he meticulously reconstructed the origins of Solidarity and its 16-month existence in 1981-82. In the book, published in the United States in April 1991, and ready for publication in Poland, Goodwyn challenges the conventional wisdom, according to which without the help and guidance of the intellectual advisors from the Church and KOR, Solidarity would never have emerged. Goodwyn claims that Solidarity was built on the original experience of Polish workers, who had learned, by 1980, the lessons of strikes and protests in 1956, 1970, and 1976. According to Goodwyn, the intelligentsia merely joined the workers and then tried to use their experience to its own benefit.

¹⁴ Lawrence Goodwyn, *Breaking the Barrier: The Rise of Solidarity in Poland* (Oxford, 1991).

No doubt, *Breaking the Barrier* is the most controversial book ever written about Solidarity. It has a number of shortcomings. The author does not understand at all the significance of the Roman Catholic faith for Polish workers. The book is also very repetitive and boring at times. But it is generally fascinating and eye-opening. It infuriated one of the two Polish translators, and almost all the other readers from the Polish intelligentsia who got hold of the manuscript. One explanation would be that Goodwyn is totally wrong, but, after the 1990 elections, it seems much more likely that he touched an all-too-sensitive nerve in the Polish intelligentsia.

As noted above, because of the negotiated character of the transition in Poland the intelligentsia dominated the Solidarity delegation at the Round Table and then in Parliament. It also dominated Mazowiecki's government. Once in power, the intelligentsia began to implement its old vision of benevolent reforms in the best interest of the people. They worked out an intelligent plan of action. They put it into operation and have had many good results. I am convinced that history will accord enormous credit to what the Polish intelligentsia did for the country during its opposition to communism and during the transition away from it.

The only thing the intelligentsia-dominated government and Parliament neglected was to communicate with the society. They claimed to rule "for the people," but they definitely did not rule "by the people" or "through the people." In private conversations, some deputies to Parliament and members of the government expressed contempt toward ordinary people. With an exceedingly bitter presidential campaign, they ridiculed their opponents and labeled them populists. After the defeat of their leader, Mazowiecki, some prominent members of the intelligentsia were quoted as saying that "the nation did not grow up to democracy." By then, it was quite obvious that the traditional paternalism of the Polish intelligentsia had resurfaced. When 80 percent of the Polish voters cast their votes against Mazowiecki, my hope is that it was not so much because of economic misery or personal ambition, but that it was precisely this paternalism that they were rejecting.

Thus, the revolution of the entire Polish nation against the communist elite was followed by the revolt of the people against their paternalistic elite. At that point, the revolutionary process entered the third phase. It can be called "capitalism against socialism." In this conflict, socialism is symbolized by big, inefficient factories that produced low quality goods at immense costs. In capitalism, such factories would be closed; this is what the German government plans to do with its East German inheritance. How-

ever, the existence of these factories is being defended by the millions of workers employed in them. The current wave of strikes has been undertaken in defense of the wages of communism. The strikers are defending the very values and mechanisms that hamper the growth of capitalism and free markets, i.e., egalitarianism, agreement to waste, inefficiency, and lack of personal responsibility for the results of one's actions and for one's life.

It is uncertain whether this battle—against a great number of the workers—can be won with the simultaneous development of democracy. But even if it is won, it will not be the end of the struggle. For when capitalism wins over socialism in Poland (and this probably applies to the rest of the former Eastern Europe as well), it will open a new conflict, between the emerging capitalists and the workers. At that point, former communist countries will get back to the very same point where the idea of a pre-planned paradise had originated before 1848—to nineteenth-century capitalism, with all its conflicts and problems. They will reenter capitalism, however, with already ineffective industry, with a polluted environment, with a ruined social/political atmosphere, and with a devastated morale.

Such will be the final price of utopia.